DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 378 097 SO 024 391

AUTHOR	Lieberman, Shelly, Ed.
TITLE	[Panola County Art and People.]
PUB DATE	89
NOTE	61p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Loblolly Inc., Gary High School, Box 189, Gary, TX 75643 ($3).
PUB TYPE	Collected Works - Serials (022) -- Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)
JOURNAL CIT	Loblolly; v13 n2 Sum 1989
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Biographies; High Schools; *High School Students; Interviews; Journalism Education; Life Events; *Local History; Oral History; *Painting (Visual Arts); Personal Narratives; Secondary Education; Social History; Social Studies; *Student Publications
IDENTIFIERS	Baptists; Neal (Margie); *Texas

ABSTRACT

This publication contains three articles written by students from Gary High School (Texas). The first article, "Baptistry Paintings" (Arthur Head and others), provides pictures, histories, and descriptions of eight paintings in Baptist churches located in East Texas. The second article, "Estelle Thomas Webb" (Debra Dubois; Sabrina Wilkerson), tells stories about life in the early 1900s around Gary (Texas), with descriptions of life on the farm and in school. The third story, "Margie Neal" (Jennifer McNatt), describes the contributions of Margie Elizabeth Neal to the history of Panola County and to the Texas education system. Neal served in the Texas senate for four consecutive terms beginning in 1926. She later worked in Washington D.C. before returning to Carthage in 1945 where she became involved in community life until her death in 1971. (CK)

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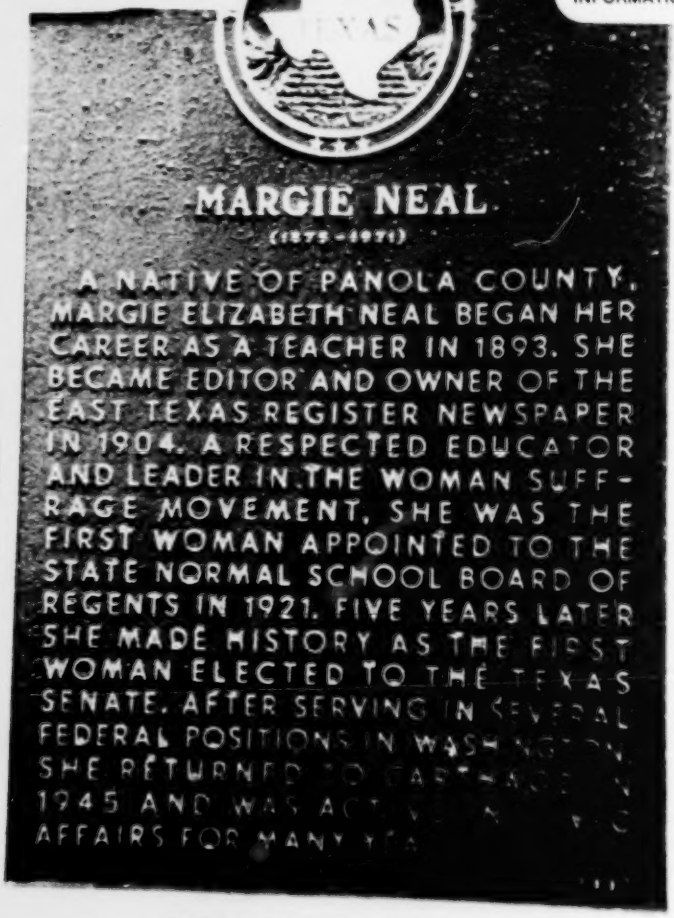
MARGIE NEAL
(1875-1971)
A NATIVE OF PANOLA COUNTY, MARGIE ELIZABETH NEAL BEGAN HER CAREER AS A TEACHER IN 1893. SHE BECAME EDITOR AND OWNER OF THE EAST TEXAS REGISTER NEWSPAPER IN 1904. A RESPECTED EDUCATOR AND LEADER IN THE WOMAN SUFFRAGE MOVEMENT, SHE WAS THE FIRST WOMAN APPOINTED TO THE STATE NORMAL SCHOOL BOARD OF REGENTS IN 1921. FIVE YEARS LATER SHE MADE HISTORY AS THE FIRST WOMAN ELECTED TO THE TEXAS SENATE. AFTER SERVING IN SEVERAL FEDERAL POSITIONS IN WASH
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Volume XIII No. 2 Summer 1989

Contents

Page 2 - Baptistry Paintings by: Arthur Head, Ronna Johnson, Kay Mauritzen, Michelle Mims, Lavon Porter, Tiffany Smith, Lynn Speer, and Stacy Templeton.

Page 11 - Estelle Thomas Webb by: Debra Dubois and Sabrina Wilkerson.

Page 41 - Margie Neal by: Jennifer McNatt.

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Loblolly Magazine published by Loblolly Inc., students at Gary High School, Box 189, Gary, Texas 75643. Circulation is by subscription and newstand. Subscriptions are $6.00 a year, single copies, $3.00. Some back issues are available. Copyright 1989 by the Loblolly Inc.

Baptistry Paintings

Often, art is said to be a pictorial recording of life in color. The artists are inspired by people, places, and events. Yet, many times we overlook some of the most beautiful and moving paintings of this area.
What more fitting place to find a work done with God-given talent and inspiration, than in church? Baptistry painting, as an art category, is seldom noticed. Amazingly, some
of the best examples in this category exist in East Texas.

DeBerry Baptist Church
DeBerry, Texas

The painting that hangs in the baptistry of the DeBerry Baptist Church was painted by Ms. Mamie Joplin. It is a picture of the Jordan River, with a lovely biblical city resting in the

background.

Although Ms. Joplin was never a charter member of the church, she donated the painting to the church free of charge. It has been hanging in the baptistry since the church was first built.

Hopewell Missionary Baptist Church
Carthage, Texas

The baptistry of the Hopewell Missionary Baptist Church was painted in 1966 by Viva Gray. This unique painting was done on beaver board and consists of three pieces. It has been said that this painting is a creative and skillful gift given to the church by Mrs. Gray.

Enterprise Missionary Baptist Church
Gary, Texas

The Enterprise Missionary Baptist Church mural was painted in 1986 by Sarah Marx, an East Texas artist. The mural is a beautiful picture of the Jordan River, flowing into the Red Sea. Reflecting off the river, in the background, is Mt. Harmon.

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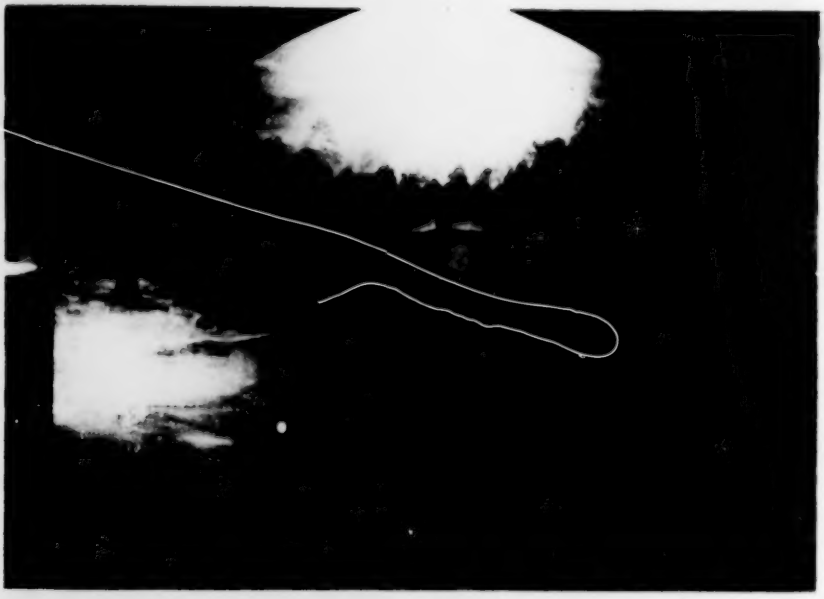
Eastside Baptist Church
Gary, Texas

The Eastside Baptist Church baptistry was painted in 1984, by Elizabeth Reneau of Pineland, Texas. The painting was donated by Mrs. Julia Young of Eastside. Mrs. Young told Mrs. Reneau what she wanted and Mrs. Reneau painted a small picture to show her. After being approved by Mrs. Young, the larger picture was painted. The painting consists of a winding river surrounded by trees.



Central Baptist Church
Carthage, Texas

The Central Baptist Church baptistry, made in the 1960's, consists of stained glass. The picture features Jesus kneeling near a rock, praying to the heavens above. When Central built onto their auditorium they moved the stained glass picture from the old auditorium baptistry to the new one.

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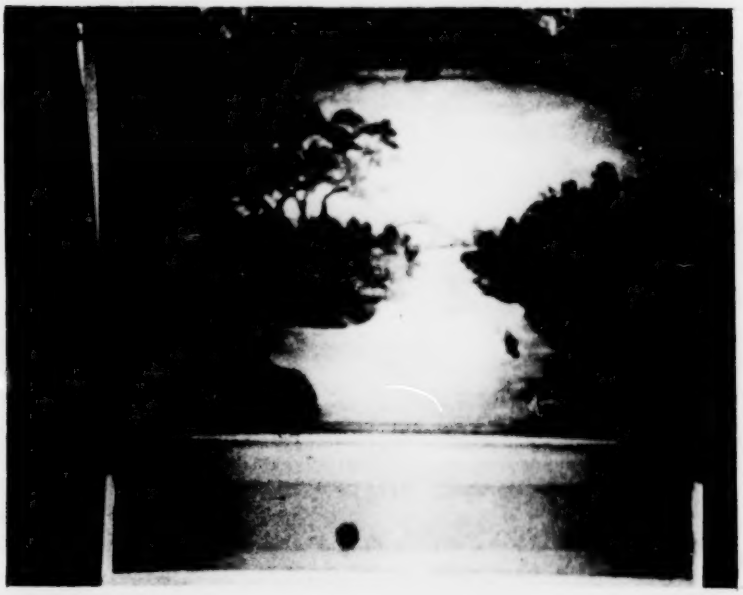
First Baptist Church
Gary, Texas

Mrs. Maude Daniels and her husband were charter members of the First Baptist Church in Gary. A new baptistry painting was needed in 1956, and although Mrs. Daniels had taken art classes she had also gotten old, so she hired Mrs. Lucille Cassidy to paint a new one. The painting is not of a famous or well known scene, but of the artist's own ideas. When the painting was completed, Mrs. Daniels donated it to the church where it has been for 38 years.

Bethel Baptist Church
Clayton, Texas

In 1954, the baptistry mural of the Bethel Baptist Church was painted to fill a space caused by the addition of rooms to the church. The painting is a reproduction of a photograph of the Jordan River in the Holy Land. The photograph was taken by D.N. Jackson and given to Mrs. Othel Bellamy of Clayton. In the 1970's, a baptistry was added and the painting became the mural backdrop.

Mrs. Bellamy, who painted the mural, was also responsible for painting pictures for other area churches. Mrs. Bellamy was considered an important member of the Clayton Community, and resided there until her death in 1974.



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Antioch Baptist Church
Antioch, Texas

This baptistry mural was painted in 1944, by Mrs. Flora Brown Hill for the First Baptist Church of Pearland, Texas. It remained in that church until a new building was built in the 1960's. At that time it was taken down, and because of her death, was given to her son, W.V. Hill.

The picture was painted from a snapshot of the Jordan River, at the place where Jesus was thought to have been baptized. Trees were added to make the scene more colorful.

When the Antioch Baptist Church built a baptistry in 1977, Mr. and Mrs. Hill, who had the picture in their home, offered it to the church. Their daughter and son-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. W.E. Spurgeon, who had both been baptized under the picture while it was at Pearland, were members of Antioch. The church voted to accept the picture and it was placed in the new baptistry, where it still hangs today.

Estelle Thomas Webb

Debra Dubois and I visited with Ms. Ona Lee Martin a short time after Thanksgiving. Ms. Martin was very congenial and offered to show us some art work she had done. She had taken some of her late husband's nails and made a picture out of them. It will be interesting for younger generations to read about life in the early 1900's. We appreciate all of the information that Ms. Martin provided us with and hope that you will enjoy the story as well.

Sabrina Wilkerson

I was born on Monday morning, October 23, 1911 in Panola County, Gary, Texas. Being the first child of Robert Feazell and Mary Applegate Hill, the first grandchild on my Mama's side and the first grand-daughter on my Papa's side was

some of the reasons I was such a spoiled child. My Mama having four single sisters only made bad matters worse.

When I was 4 years old my parents and I, with two younger brothers, Jimmy and Claburn, moved to Tulia, Swisher Co., Texas to live on a cattle ranch. It was a severely cold winter. Ice, snow, and bitter wind kept everything frozen. Papa's job was to feed, water and care for the cattle. He was busy thawing widmill pipes to keep water flowing in the tanks for them.

I remember the small tin heater, that kept us from freezing when it was "red hot",it was about 15 or 20 inches from the wall. Child-like, I had to go between it and the wall. I put my hand flat on the back of the heater to push myself thru. I cried the rest of the day with my little blistered hands.

We moved by train back to Gary when winter was over. I had never seen things whiz by my window as fast as they did on that train trip home. But that was not fast enough to keep me from catching the measles. The family took them from me. Uncle Willis Heaton came to visit us and as he was leaving, he didn't want my papa to relapse, so he told him if he caught him in town he would whip him.Frightened me to death! I didn't want my papa whipped.

We were at my Mama's parents house, "Daddy-Pop and Mi-Mammy." They had a telephone installed across the open hall from the bedroom I was in. I had never seen a telephone but all the kicking and screaming I did didn't get me across the hall until they felt sure I was well over the measles.

We moved to a 2-room house at Mt. Bethel. It was while we lived there another brother, Dennis, was born. Claburn wasn't ready to move over, so when he had to - he turned himself around at his mama's feet until he outgrew the foot of the bed.

Jimmy was big enough to pester his little sister. I hid my new leather slippers from him under the bed. Before daylight my mama poured a bucket of chips in the fireplace to start a fire to warm the room for the baby's bath. My shoes!

My little shoes could not be found. I remember mama sifting thru the ashes looking - but my little shoes were gone.

While we lived there, one night Jimmy went to the kitchen, without a light, for a piece of cornbread for the dog. He yelled and everybody ran to see what happened. He had stepped, barefooted, on the first "stinging lizard" he and I had ever seen.

When I was 6 years old we moved to Angelina County. Papa had a job carrying mail out of Homer, Texas. It was while we lived there that World War I ended. I can remember hearing guns shooting and all the noise from town as people celebrated this happy occasion.

My first little baby sister, Dena Fay, came to our house while we lived there.

When I was 7 years old Papa bought a 5-room house on a 65 acre farm in Panola County which was our home until, one by one, each left to make a life of his own.

Jimmy and I started school at Mt. Bethel the same year, walking about a mile of dirt road to a two-room school house. If we had a big rain the water got to high in one place in our road for us to cross. We had to go around by Pa Heaton's and thru the field to get home.

When the school's little bell rang for "books" pupils lined up in two lines and stood at "attention" until teacher gave the word "pass." We marched in very, very quietly and in order, to our desks and stood until she said, "Be seated."

One of the first things I learned about in school was to make friends. I can remember, yet, the good feeling I had in knowing the joy of loving and being loved by new little friends.

Christine Graves (Smith) was my first chum. We built our playhouse out of pine straw, making walls and leaving space for our open doors, using broken pieces of glass for our kitchen dishes and any old stick for our baby. After we made our mud pies and cleaned our houses, we visited each other just like grown-ups. Ah! the wonderful, beatiful fairyland in the imagination of a child! Later years Violet Burroughs was my best friend.

In my primer I learned "May" and "Will" and "The engine that said I think I can, I think I can" and "Little Red Hen." How to spell "Cat" and "Rat."

Each child carried a book satchel made from cloth with a strap over the shoulder with the other arm through the opening. In them, we carried a cedar pencil, a "Big Chief" writing tablet, painting pencils, our books and our lunch.

Our lunches usually cosisted of biscuits, ham or sausage, scrambled or boiled eggs, baked sweet potatoes, pies from home dried peaches, Tea-cakes, or Ginger cookies made with home-made Ribbon Cane syrup. Lunches were wrapped in "The Semi-weekly Farm News", newspaper or "Cappers Farmer" and tied with a twine string. Each child carried it's own little aluminum drinking cup that was made of 4 or 5 ring sections and when not in use would stack into a nice flat package that was easily carried. We drank water from a spring that ran red water. It had a peculiar taste but not distasteful. We liked it.

Our home was a happy one. Mama was not a 'singer' but she sang all the time, just for the joy of living. Many of the old songs we sing today, the childeren remember her singing.

As years went by 3 more girls, Edna, Annie Lura, Callie and another little boy, Robert, were added to our family. Robert was born on a Thursday. On the following Monday morning, after eating breakfast our little Mama died, at age 32.

I was 14 years old. Besides the 4-day old baby, there was a 2, 3, 5, 7, 8, 11, 12 year old. They were my babies and still are.

Mama's sister, Aunt Vesta Bae and her husband, Uncle Guyler Ford, with their only child Rabon, about 10, lived with Daddy-Pop and Mi-Mammy. They carried our little baby home with them to care for him. Callie was our 2-year old baby at home.

Needless to say, I had many, many things to learn. I had to leave school. Trying as best I could to learn to cook, clean house, do the washing and ironing but hardest of all was learning to do without my Mama.

One day Papa had a man helping him cut wood. I was trying to cook dinner. I had made a stacked cake but my filling was too 'runny'. I was turning the cake round and round, scopping the filling up and putting it back on top - hoping that by some magic trick it woould eventually decide to stay put. Watching it, as I turned the plate,round and round, round and round, I forget to watch the table's edge - bottom side up on the floor went company cake! That was only many of the things I turned up-side down in the learning I had to do.

Papa married again the next year. "Mother" we called Mrs. Rachel, because her daughter, Melba, then about 9 and her son, Bruce, about 6 called her mother. Then, we started callin Papa "Dady." Now, with Dady and Mother we brought the baby brother home to llive with us. In about 6 years, another little sister, Zelma Rene, came to our house. She was my "Peaches." She made 14 in our household.

Living on the farm those days we had very little that was not home-grown and home-made. We had only the games and playthings that were made from materials we could find.

We made a switch cane whistles by cutting hollow switch cane about 8 to 10 inches long and notching a "V" opening in the center. By blowing hard you could get a shrill whistle that could be heard a great distance.

Horns were made from cow horns and used for calling dogs on 'possum and 'coon hunts.' The boys always had a dog or two, and one of their favorite pass times was 'possum hunting at night. They would light their lantern, get an ax, call the dogs and off to the woods with their old cow horn.

Tom Walkers, one for each foot, were made from two narrow pieces of lumber about 4 feet long with a "step" nailed about 10 or 12 inches from the bottom with a brace so the step would hold your weight. If you were careful, you could "walk tall" by walking with one foot in each step.

Nigger Shooter Stocks were whittled from wood in the shape of a "Y" about 8 or 10 inches long. Two strips of rubber inner tube was attached, with

a piece of leather in between, for holding the ammunition. Loaded with rocks or peach seed this was 'the' weapon for birds and sometimes rabbits. Sling-shots were also used for killing birds and rabbits.

The see-saw was made by placing a plank 10 or 12 feet long and 10 or 12 inches wide over a big log, stump or saw-horse. One child on each end would ride "up and down" - "up and down."

Jump boards were built in the same fashion except not so high of the ground. One child on either end, jumped standing on and bounced the other into midair.

Mumble-peg was a game played with a two-bladed pocket knife. One blade was fully opened, another half open and with the knife resting on the ground it was flipped with a finger. Points for the game were determined by the position the knife was in when it landed. The aim was to land it with the blade points in the ground.

Marbles wasa favorite game all the family played. Boys learned their first "trading" by swappin their "taw" marble.

Pitching Washers was a favorite outdoor pass-time with men and boys alike. Guess it really started with silver dollars, but since we had no silver dollars, we used washers the size of a dollar. Two little round holes about the size of a tea cup were dug about 20 to 25 feet apart. Players stood at either end and pitched washers into the hole, if they were good enough at it.

Jacks was the girls favorite indoor pass-time. We didn't have jacks, but if we could afford a small rubber ball, peach seed worked as well at our house.

Dominoes and "42" was saturday night's entertainment in winter time. Everybody got in on those games. Somtimes Mother would serve us hot home-made light bread. I can smell it yet.

Roll-a-hoop was a stick with a short cross stick nailed at the bottom end. The hoop was about 8 or 10 inches across. usually, from an old wagon hub. You started the hoop rolling and with the stick pushing it you trotted along behind it

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to keep it rolling without falling over. This was not an easy trick on dirt roads or grassy trails. We had no oil or paved surface on the farm.

We had enough players for our own ball team. Balls were made from worn-out raveled knitted sock tops. The heel always wore out first then we got the ball.

A long rope with both ends tied to a high tree limb with a board for a seat was ideal swing. Another good swing was an old car tire tied to a rope and the other end tied to a high tree limb. You hung on, running, until the tire picked you up then back and forth, back and forth, as long as you cared to swing. Another good use for the old tire was to try to keep it rolling as long as you could without it's falling over.

We made rag dolls stuffed with cotton and dressed them from brightly colored print scraps - mant times to match our own dresses. We cut paper dolls from the Sears, Roebuck catalouges and would have the entire family. Papa, Mama and the children in 'everyday' clothes and 'sunday' as well. We would have the preacher and the church with it's pews as well as home and school with it's teachers. We kept our paper dolls in shoe boxes under the bed.

We made beads by boiling China berries until the pulp would wash off. The seed had a beautiful shape with it's own grooves and a hole through the center for stringing. Sometimes we dyed them with Poke Berry juice.

We learned "Jumping Rope" at school. One child would hold either end of a 20 or 30 foot rope, slinging it in a big 'loop'. The children lined up and one at the time ran into the loop as it came over, jumping it and running out without the rope touching them. Sometimes, one jumper would stay in, jumping until he, by accident, hit the rope. At times, two jumped at the same time, as partners.

We played volleyball, tennis, and basketball at school. "Crack the Whip" was another school game, usually among the older children. They lined up, holding hands, ran for a distance, the

leader slinging, and down the entire line each was slung in a circle - if your handhold slipped and the line was broken, you flipped rolling in the dirt, often carrying others down with you. This game was a mite to rough for me.

Friday afternoon, about once a month, we would have a spelling match. Two leaders were chosen by the teacher, then each leader chose one at a time until all children were taken. Teacher called out the words - if you mispelled the word you sat down. Words were given until the last one was left standing, then the game was over.

Box suppers were common about once a year. That was fun! Prizes were given for the most beautiful box. Some were ships, houses, baskets, ladies hats, etc. And then, the excitement of seeing who the highest bidder would be for your box. As teenagers we always hoped our "secret crush" would be the one we would be priviledged to eat with.

Sometime we had plays, recitations and debates to entertain the parents. I went back to school after Dady and Mother married. After I finished high school at Gary, the teacher, Mr.Walter Wood, asked me to play the part of "mother" in the play "The Prodical Son" that they were putting on in the two-room school house at Mt. Bethel. The night of the play we moved the stage and benches out doors under the open skies. I was on stage as the curtain went up. I saw tiny rain-drops on the arm of my rocker, I kept thinking we would have to call the whole thing off until I was well into the play before I thought to be stage frightened. It did not rain us out. Being outside, we had to speak loud so all could understand. I had gone a short distance into the play when my voice began to quiver. The play was sad story with a happy ending and with my quaking voice many told me I was a real broken-hearted mother over her wandering boy!

Spring on the farm was a happy time! First sign was the little 4-petal lilac colored daisy and the wild onions.

Songbirds of every size and color seem to have a new song. As the farmer began to break the

ground (nothing smells better to a farmer than a freshly plowed soil) for his new crop, the birds were just as busy building their love nests.

We had a marsh at the cross-road near the house and frogs always held their jubilee there in the spring. I liked to hear them croaking brings back sweet memories.

Guineas always stole their nests to lay their little brown speckled eggs in rail fence corners, in the tall grass or bushes. Was fun to find them before wild animals did. If you heard the flock chanting, cackling and screaming you could bet there was an enemy in sight. Could be the old house cat, a strange dog, a snake, a rabbit or anything they feared would harm them or their little ones.

Daddy started planting corn before school was out each year. Sometimes it was planted every other row with peas planted between. Corn had to be thinned. I didn't like that job because I could never decide which stalk to cut up. You had to dig it up - if you cut it off it would come out and go right on growing.

Crawfish started building their little mud castles, stack on stack, around the pond or in any wet marsh. The boys would tie a piece of fat meat on a string, slip it down into the castle and up came the crawfish hanging on for dear life. The boys delighted in chasing the girls as far as they could run with one of those hideous looking creatures. I was scared to death of them!

Turtles and Terrapins started crawling about the time snakes did. The first terrapin that Jimmy and I found we tried to bust it open. We didn't know what it was! We carried it to the house and Mama told us that it could have bitten us. The saying was - if one bit you, it would not turn loose until it thundered. We let that buddy go in a hurry!

Tomatoes were the first grown in hot beds then set in cold frames early in the spring. Cold framed were usually 30 or 40 feet by 12 or 15 feet with 12 inch planks for walls. Over the center of the frame ran a ridge pole about 10 or 12 inches higher than the wall. Staves or cross pieces of

wood were nailed to the center ridge and sides about 2 feet apart. This was covered over with a sheet of unbleached muslin to protect the tender plants from the cold and let the sunshine thru. If weather got to cold pine straw was thrown on top of the sheet. The ground was carefully prepared and highly fertilized. The plants were set in exact spaces about 6 inches apart. This was done by sitting on a plank that was across the frame and using a pegboard that reached across the bed. Each peg was the exact distance to set the plants so that when time came to transplant them to the field, each one could be cut in a block of dirt, placed carefully on a slide pulled by a horse or mule and set 3 feet apart in rows. Plants had to be watered while they were in the cold frames. That meant water drawn from the well by the buckets and poured into a barrel to be hauled to the cold frame in the field. A frame of tomato plants, ready to be set out, was a thing of beauty.

At a certain stage in their growth, each plant had to be pruned, stuck with a stick, tied, and finally toppped. My greatest fear was that there would be a hail storm that would destroy the whole crop.

Tomatoes were the first crop to be harvested. Daddy always worked at the sheds, grading tomatoes. We gathered them when they were ready for the market, loading them in crates on our old 1924 flatbed Model T. I was the truck driver. There was a bridge not far down the road that had loose boards in it. Bruce, who was my trouble shooter, would ride that far with me to see me safely over, then return to help gather the next load.

We like raising tomatoes better than cotton because we didn't have to wait so long to sell, and that meant we might have a little money to spend. Three cents a pound was good money. We sold many for half a cent per pound You had a backache only when picking the cotton, but raising tomatoes was a backache all the way!

Cane was planted early and always on new

ground, if you had new ground. It was planted by laying the long cane stalks in the row and covering them. It had to be cultivated and hoed. I hated to hoe cane because I always managed to cut it down while I was trying to get the grass.

Many times if a farmer had the land to clear for new ground for a cane patch he would give a "log rolling." His neighbors would come help him chop and saw trees and grub stumps, rolling everything into one great heap and then setting fire to it. While this was being done, the wives were busy cooking dinner or quilting. It was a hard day's work for everyone, but it was fun just being together.

Cotton was planted after the ground warmed. It was chopped or thinned to stand about the width of the hoe and all the grass hoed out as you chopped. After it began to bloom it was hoed again. The boys usually did the plowing. They were not very old before they learned "Gee" from "Haw." The girls did most of the hoeing. The boys helped when they caught up with the plowing.

By this time of the year the weather was getting hot. All 5 girls wore blue jeans with denim jackets and slat bonnets made from white ducking and most of the time all were barefooted. Dady could never tell us apart. He sometimes called every name before getting the one he wanted to answer. The ground would be so hot at times we stood in the shade the cotton stalk made or we dug a hole with our hole to the cool damp ground and stood in it to cool our feet. The sun would be so hot we could see the heat waves as we watched for Edna coming from the house with a bucket of fres water and a batch of tea-cakes, warm from the oven, Mother was sending us. Dady usually filed our hoes while we rested long enough to eat and drink.

Edna was mother's little helper. With pans of dishes to wash, rooms of beds to be made, a house of floors to be swept, vegetables to be gathered, washed and cooked, churning to be done, water to be drawn att the well and carried to the house for all needs --- I marvel at the work that was done at our house.

If cotton farmers had their fields fenced for geese, they were used for eating grass out of the cotton and you didn't have to hoe it. If you heard a hissing sound coming from behind, you had better be moving - the old gander could pinch a piece of you. Geese were picked and feathers used for feather beds and pillows. Feather beds were nice and warm in the winter time.

My Daddy-Pop told us a story about an old sittin' goose he tried to break from sitting. Geese build their nest on the ground and something had gotten this old goose's eggs. She just kept 'settin' on nothing. Daddy-Pop tried everything he knew to break her up. Finally, he drove sticks in the ground in her nest. He thought, now for sure, I've got her. Said he went back down there and 'I Guinea, thar she wuz a standin' up a sottin."

Sweet potatoes were first bedded, side by side, in a seed bed. As the 'slips' came up they were pulled and set in rows in the field. Rows were made up, each plant was dropped about 3 feet apart by one child, another followed with a sharpened stick, punching the root into the softly ground and packing it with his foot. Slips could be pulled for several plantings as they grew in the bed. When the plants in the the field had made "runners" they were cut back and planted in the same fashion as the slips. The ground had to be moist for the "runners" to root. So it was always after a good rain that we cut and put out the runners. After the vines had grown into the middles they had to be "turned" for plowing. I hated hoeing potatoes. They were so easily cut off. Ah! you could always dig a hole and poke it in it and if the ground was damp enough it would root and grow.

Peanuts were planted after the ground warmed. They made such a beautiful plant. No crop is prettier than a field of growing peanuts!

Watermelons and muskmelons were planted in hills in the field with space between hills and rows for them to run 10 to 15 feet. We always planted enough for family, neighbors and some left over for the hogs. We enjoyed eating watermelons. When Annie Laura was beginning to talk she

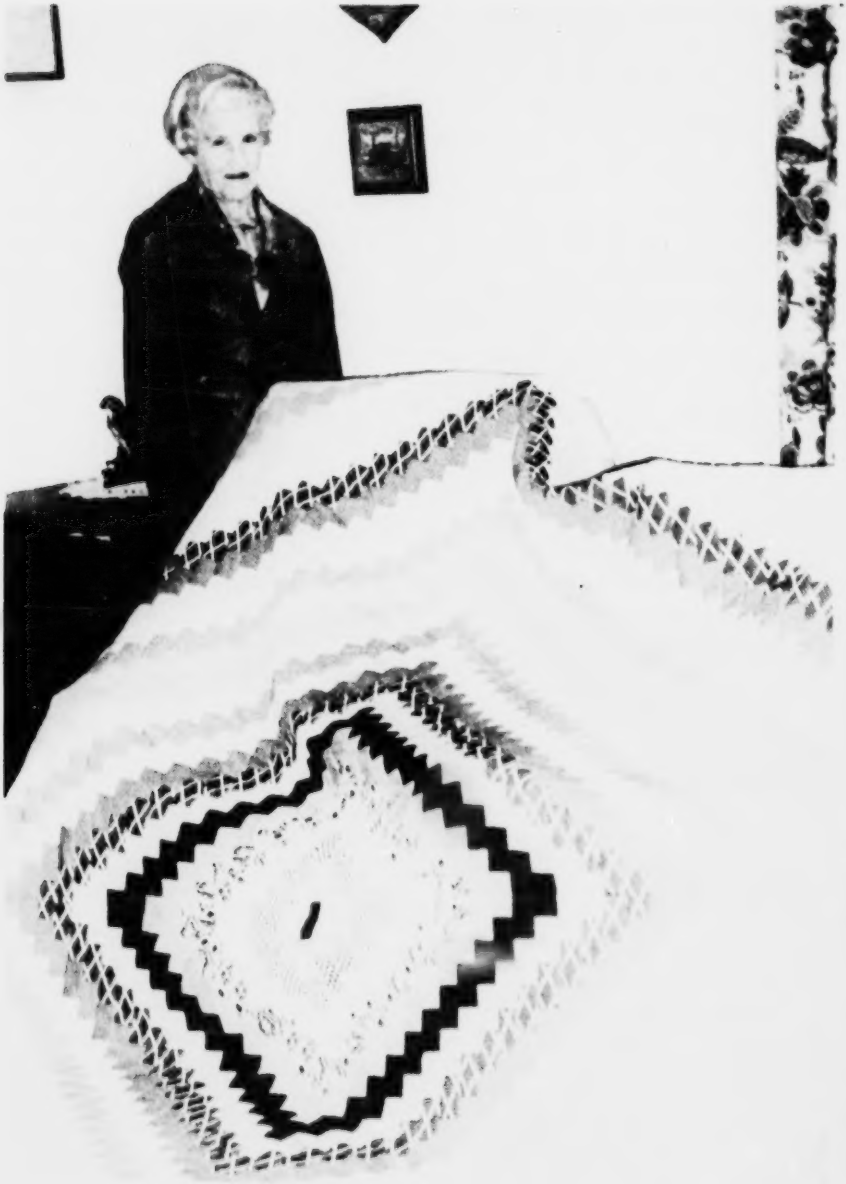
memorized the little poem, "I see the moon, the moon sees me, God Bless the moon and God Bless me." Instead of her saying "God Bless me", she said, "God Bless the watermelon."
We remembered that a long time. Another thing we remember her saying. The little girls wore aprons (dresses) with two little round collars, a pocket on the front, buttoned down the back with a belt across the back. They could not unbutton them themselves. Annie Laura would always ask us to "Do - Un my dress."

Along with spring planting there was always the vegetable garden. Much planning and many kinds of vegetables went into it because most of our living came from our food grown there. Peas, corn and tomatoes were grown in the field. First, the garden had to be fenced with pickets or panelings nailed close enough together to keep the rabbits out and tall enough to keep the chickens from flying over. My Dady never liked to plow the garden. Plants were easily uprooted and it was such a hard job to turn around the corners near the fence. So after the ground was broken, rows were made up, seeds planted and up, we did most of the cultivating with hoes. My Dady-Pop told about his neighbor not liking to plow his garden. He said, "The old man always went in their mad."

Follow the path outside the garden fence and you would find the "out side" with a latch outside and a string to wind around the nail on the inside for closing the door. Two holes cut in the bench and the Sears Roebuck Catalogue with a basket in the corner for "wipe-up" jobs. Periodically it had to be cleaned.

Along with all the spring planting would go the summer flower planting in the yard. Flocks, Petunias, Hollyhocks, Violets, and the like came up volunteer each year, but others were planted. The yard was fenced with planks. The biggest part, except the flower beds were kept hoed and swept clean with a brush broom.

Even the old hens knew that springtime was a time for new crops. The all started setting. Some of them were set on eggs to hatch for fryers for eating and pullets for new fall laying hens.



When the fryers were old enough, they were caught, put in a coop and fed several days before the kill. One time Jimmy and I were building a chicken coop, he had me standing barefooted on a plank he was sawing --- he almost sawed my wee - wee toe off.

My Grandma Heaton let me borrow her "Little Brown Hen" incubator. I set it on 50 eggs. It was such an undertaking for an 11 or 12 year old, but the let me handle it. Each morning the eggs had to be turned, left to cool for a while and sprinkled with warm water. The litle lamp had to be filled with kerosene, relighted and the temperature adjusted all over again. As the eggs began to hatch the temperature began to climb. I can remember hopping up all thru the night checking on "my" chicks. After they were frying size, one day they were eating bits of feed left in the horse trough and, Claburn who was barely old enough to plow, rode the little plow mule "Ada" in from the field at noon time. As she poked her head over in the trough she frightened the chickens --- they flew up and frightened her --- she jumped back --- Claburn fell off and broke his arm.

Best of all in springtime - school was out. Even though it meant field work, we were glad for the first warm days so that we could hang our winter clothes away and go barefoot wading in the streams that ran thru the pasture.

Springtime was kite flying time. Nothing was more exciting than watching your homemade kite fly into the wild blue yonder and climb and climb, to the full length of it's string.

We milked cows for milk and butter for family use. Most of the cows were gentle to handle and would come to the barn for feed in the winter but summer time was a different story. They were to busy eating the fresh green pasture grass and we didn't always feed them in the summer. We had one who always wore a bell so we could hear and know where to fimd them to drive them in. The baby calves were kept in a seperate pasture and they were always ready for milking time, which was also bath time for them. They were allowed to nurse

before we began milking, then roped off by making in a loop in the end of a rope, placing it around the calf's neck, another loop thru the first and over the calf's nose - he didn't like it - but he was then tied to a post ot the fence. His mother would bathe him from one end to the other by licking him with her tongue while we milked her.

One of our best miilk cows was old "Maude." She gave the richest and best milk but was as mean as they get. You knew what to expect but you never knew when. About the time your bucket was half filled with milk she would, for no reason, kick you 'a-windin', not only wasting all the milk but giving you a bath in it. Claburn decided he would show the girls she could be milked with "no kicking." All the girls backed off against the barnyard fence to watch this show. He took his bucket, sat flat on the ground with his legs straight out under her, and began to milk. He had no more than half a bucket when she let him have it! She knocked him flat! He didn't live that down for a long while!

Mornings milk in the summer, was strained into syrup buckets and let down by rope into the water well to keep sweet for supper. We had no ice box or refrigerator. The nights milk was strained and with the cream off the mornings milk, put in the churn to "turn" (sour and clabber) to churn the next morning for butter and buttermilk. There was no trouble "turning" the milk in the summer when the temperature wwas warm but in the winter the churn was carried from the kitchen to the fireplace. It was turned round and round in front of the fire to keep the temperature right until it was ready for churning. We had to be very careful with milk. The straining cloth was a special one used for nothing else. The "churn rag" that was tied over the churn was a special one used nothing else. The buckets, usually 2-lb lard buckets to milk in and syrup buckets to put the milk in the well in, were washed, scalded with hot water and hung on nails on the outside wall beside the kitchen door in the sunshine. The churn was washed and scalded and at times scrubbed with baking soda. In the summer the cows ate the

bitterweeds that grew with the grasses they ate. This would make the milk bitter. It was not good but we drank it just the same.

With warm weather and rain came the mosquitoes. We burned smothering rags in buckets to smoke them out of the bedrooms at night. We used a white misquitoe net to cover the baby bed. Occoasionally, one or more of us would complain with chills and fever. Nothing more than a few doses of Black Draught Tea wouldn't cure. We hated that stuff! In the winter if we had bad colds mother pulled out the old "granny rag", which was a flannel cloth about 10 x 12 inches and redoctored it with turpentine, vicks salve, kerosene and talor, heated it hot enough to blister your chest, put it on and covered it with a towel --- pull the covers over your head and the vapor would go to your toes. Bed clothes smelled like it until they were washed.

Except for measles, hooping cough, chicken pox, one spell of pneumonia Dady had and a serious spell of sickness Zelma Rene had when she was small, Jimmy being bitten by a ground rattler, for such a large family, we were wonderfully blessed with good health. As for other complaints a peach switch was kept handy but seldom used. We know it could be - it didn't have to be!

Crops were laid by and now the long hot days of summer were here.

Time for canning and drying fruits and vegetables. Dady usually bought sugar by the 100 lb bags for summer use. Peaches were canned and dried. Nothing smells better or is better that homedried peaches! Tomatoes were canned by the tubs full in half-gallon jars. Chow-chow and pickles were canned to add to the winter diet. Dewberries were picked from the fence rows where they grow wild. Blackberries a little later - both used for pies, jellies and jam. Along with the berry picking came chiggers or "red bugs", no bigger than a pin head but would sting or itch for a week after they bit. We put "coal oil" (kerosene) on them. Mulberries were best eaten off the tree, bugs and all.

One time Jimmy and I were picking

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blackberries at the back garden fence. There was a big wasp nest in the vines. Jimmy said he was going to make them sting me, so with a log stick he let them have it - you guessed it!, they got him and both eyelids swelled together.

Wash days were always a big day! Water was drawn by bucket and rope to fill 3 tubs and 2 wash pots to begin with. Fres were built under the wash pots of water ti which chipped soap, sometimes home-made lye soap, sometimes P & G soap and a little lye had been added to boil the clothes in. Clothes were sorted into piles - white ones to he boiled - colored ones NOT to be boiled and colored work clothes that had to be. Each garment was then turned "wrong-side-oddereds." After rubbing the white ones on the rub board they were put in the pot to boil, using a battling stick they were kept punched and turned as they boiled. The colored work clothes were then rubbed in the same water the white ones were rubbed in and they were boiled. More clean water was drawn for rinse water. A little "bluing" was added to the last rinse water to keep the white clothes white. After all the white ones were hung to dry the better colored print dresses and shirts were rubbed thru the rinse water and fresh water was drawn to rinse them thru. If there wa a douht as to whether to print was fast color, before it was washed the first time, it was soaked overnight in strong salt water to set the color. Most of the print dresses were starched before hanging to dry. Wash day at our house was not quick-over-with job. Besides the clothing 14 of us wore there were sheets, pillowcases, towels and mother never threw a rag away. You should have seen our little rags (our bath rags) hanging on the barb-wire fence every wash day! We had the bottom big drawer of the kitchen cabinet full! It was our "rag drawer." Our 'every-day' towels were made from fertilizer sacks, hemmed and with a loop on one corner for hanging on the nail at the water shelf at the end of the hall. During school I walked 2 miles to school and every monday at noon, 2 miles home to help do the washing if weather permitted.

Summer was a little better because all the little girls could help.

When the last piece was hung on the line, hot water from the pots was carried by the buckets full and poured on the kitchen floor that had been sprinkled with ashes. The floor was then scrubbed with a mop made from a 2 by 6 about 15 inches long attached to a handle with corn shucks poked thru slots for the scrubbing. If it wasn't heavy enough a 3-lb flat iron was run down the handle. Up and down - up and down - the floor until greasy spot was gone. It was then rinsed with clean water and swept as dry as possible so it would be completely dry by supper time. Benches on either side of the eating table were also scrubbed. Always smelled so clean!

Ironing was done with heavy smoothing irons were heated on the cook stove or in the fireplace. It wasn't easy to keep them the right temperature. If they were to hot they would scorch the clothes and if they weren't hot enough they wouldn't get the wrinkles out, and occasionally you were sure to get a black spot os smut on the collar of the only white shirt in the wash.

In the long hot sunny days of summer every few weeks we would put all the mattresses on the porch to "sun." All the beautiful quilts from their storage in the quilt box were hung on the clothes line to fluff up and absorb the fresh air.

On one such hot day, Dennis, then about 9, was out in the yard catching butterflies. He was heard to say "boy this sun in squrtin' down." Next thing we heard was a cry for help. He didn't know bumblebees were not as harmless as butterflies.

Saturday was a day for getting ready for Sunday. Yards were cleaned and swept. The cedar bucket with the brass bands, the dipper that might be made of a gourd, a coconut or might be a "store - bought" aluminum or granite, from which all family members and guests alike drank, was scrubbed inside and out until it smelled like new.

Church clothes for each one was all ready. Shoes shine, hair cut and shampooed - tub baths were kost of the time in the wash tub of water

Dady-Pop and MiMammy
Mama and her 4 Sisters
Cumi, Mama, Ruby (front)
Dena and Vesta Bea

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left in the sun to warm. In the winter, water was warmed on the cook stove and baths were taken in the kitchen by the stove.

Once a month we had a preaching. Saturday at 11 o'clock was Conference Day. Then Saturday night and Sunday morning preaching. No sunday night preaching but prayer meeting. The preach usually came by horseback or horse and buggy from some distance away and would leave soon after noon on sunday. He was a frequent over night visitor at our house, and was always a special guest. We had sunday school every sunday.

Mother planned sunday lunch and had to cook most of it before sunday school because we had no way to keep food over night. She would be out killing and cleaning frvers before we woke up.

All was not work with no play though. We had fun working and playing together and young people spent time woth each other on weekends.

One day the little girls and Robert were walking down the road - the girls were giving him a rough time - picking at him - aggrevating him. He got enough of it - turned around and told them - if they didn't let him alone ha was going to kick them in "THE UGLY WORD."

Dady taught us all music. I first learned to play an old organ that he repaired and began playing for church services when I was 9 years old. The church did not have an organ but bought one against some of the members objections. They said I "played the Devil" when I played it for services. Someone, we never knew who, took the organ outside and burned it. Others then bought a piano, built a closet in the corner of the church and would lock it up after every service.

We later bought a piano at home and Dady managed to 4 horns. Bass, slide-trombone, trumpet and frech horn that I had to transpose the music to play with the other instruments. These gave us the 4 parts of sacred songs. We would all load up - horns - books - kids and all in the 1924 flat bed truck and go to annual all-day singings far and near. We had our own singing quartet and while spread lunch and others ate we stood on the truck bed and blew our horns outside the church

building.

Dady sometimes taught singing schools in surrounding communities. Once a year, we got new Stamps Song Books. We never stopped until we had gone thru the book. Those were the "Good Old Days."

Jimmy played trumpet and I played alto on my french horn. Many times before time to go to school he and I would stand on the end of our long front porch and play several songs. They could be heard for miles on the frosty winter air. We did it when we got to school the kids would tell us they had heard us!

Protracted meetings were held every summer and most of the time under a brush arbor because it was cooler outside the church building. Lanterns were hung around the sides and benches and pulpit were moved from the church builing. I joined Mt Bethel Baptist Church, July 15, 1925, under such an arbor and was baptized near Brushy Creek near the church. I was saved in the 2-room school house April 13, but Satan persuaded me to wait for the Summer Protracted Meeting to join the church.

During these meetings Young People would all go to one home to be together for dinner and after eating would have prayer meetings and singing. Maybe eat watermelons, cantelopes and peaches, go to a swimming hole wading --- not many swam --- pick sweet gum and find stretch berries to go in it - and back to church for night services.

Play parties were given in the homes of younger married couples. Dady wasn't too much for our going. We'd slip around and get mother to ask him if we could go. She usually got the job done for us. We played games and enjoyed being together. Couples found each other playing a game we called "snap." In this game you were allowed to hold hands with your partner without neighborhood gossip. Here was usually where the "sparkin'" began!

Boys would ride their saddle horse and walk their 'sweetheart' home from parties or church, leading the horse. Dennis sometimes played his French Harp to his sweetie. The magic in those

moolight summer nights with a full moon with a lady in it and a million stars shining in the sky!

One day Dena Fay and I decided we would ride horeback to Buncombe to Aunt Dena's and Aunt Bea - B's. Neither of us could ride - we sat on the horse about like a sack of potatoes. We were riding the same horse with our clothes in a shopping bag tied to the saddle. We came to the bridge with water standing at the edge. The big old long - legged, gawky, slow poke didn't want to get his feet wet so he stop too near the banister on the bridge ripping the bottom of the clothes bag and into the muddy water went all our clothes!

The long hot summer is now by - gone- days!

Cotton is opening - corn has dried to brittle brown. Peanuts, potatoes and sugar cane are all ready to be harvested.

First thing, everybody had to have a cottonsack his own special size - made from white ducking. The longer ones were 8 or 10 feet long - that would carry 50 or 60 lbs. They were made with a shoulder strap - one arm thru the loop - and had a cotton boll wired in one bottom corner with a loop of wire. Hang the wire loop and the shoulder strap on the scales to weigh the sack of cotton. When the bottom of the sack wore out Mother would turn it over and sew the strap on the other side. Picking and pulling a sack of cotton was back breaking. Older ones sometimes crawled on their knees weaaring knee-pads part of the time. A real good cotton - picker, if the cotton was good, could pick 175 to 200 lbs a day. I had a few of those days. I always hated bending over to pick the bottom bolls of the stalk and from the top of the stalk - not 6 inches from my face was a "Devil's horse." I was afraid of those 'boogers'. Cotton was weighed and emptied in the cotton house until we picked a bale, 1400 lbs. or about, then it was carries to the gin and baled. Cotton was sold but most of the time seed were brought home for cow feed for the winter.

Selling cotton meant Mother could make her order to Sears, Roebuck for everybody new school clothes - shirts, overalls, jackets, sweaters, caps, 12 cents a yard for paradise print for girls

dresses, shoes, sock for boys and cotton stockings for the girls, underclothes too. Thr order came and all the new stuff had it's own special aroma - that was the good part of school!

School opening was usually delayed until a greater part of the cotton crop was gathered. We finished after school and on saturdays. We picked the scrap cotton for mother's quilting cotton.

Corn was pulled and thrown in heap rows then hauled to the corn crib in the wagon. It was fed to the horses, mules and hogs. Horses and mules feed was shucked, run through the corn sheller and it was ready. The hogs corn was soaked in water - maybe in the dish water we called "slop." Sometimes Dady would carry a sack to Jack Atkerson' Grist mill and have it ground into meal.

Peanuts were plowed up and after drying a few days, stacked in shocks in the field until thoroughly cured. They were then hauled to the hay - loft. The vines were fed to the cows for hay, the peanuts for hogs and family. We headed for the peanut loft when we came in from school. I could climb a latter to the moon but i had just a soon slept in the loft as to climb down. We'd pick off a pan of peanuts and mother would parch them for us for after supper eating in front of the fireplace. It wasn't unusual for us to find a hen's nest in the loft. The hens liked to steal their nest in the hay. If they were sitting, you'd better watch out!

Potatoes were plowed up, stacked in piles and hauled to the potato house. Seed potatoes were put in a kiln, made tepee style out of corn stalks with dirt banked around it and an old cotton sack thrown over the top with a tub for the crown to keep winter rains out. It was not opened untilt time to bed potatoes for slips next spring.

Sugar cane was cut, peeled, hauled and stacked at the syrup mill before frost. Usually there was one man in the community who was best at cooking syrup. It was run through the mill to make juice. With a fire just the right temperature the juice was run from pan to pan (was really a vat about 6 ft across) as the juice thickened. When it was of right consistancy it

Center Front: Robert
Left to Right:
First Row: Callie, Annie Lura, Edna, Dena Fay and Melba

Second Row: Bruce, Dennis, Claburn, Jimmy and me.

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was run into buckets and sealed. Usually this was a community project because it took several men to keep it going.

Fall was hickory nut and black walnut gathering time, also muscadine and wild grapes for jelly. Chinkapins, huckleberries and blackhaws were good to eat and fun hunting when there was several together for an afternoon outing.

Occasionally we could find a bee hive in a hollow tree with honey. That was a job for someone who knew how to handle it without getting stung.

Then came cold weather and with it "Hog Killin'" time. That was usually a job several neighbors did together. The old fat hog was shot in the head and his throat cut so he would bleed. With a pot of boiling water ready he was then poked in a barrel that had been properly tilted so that he could be rolled over in the hot water. Now, scalded he could be scraped clean. He was then hooked by his hind feet to a single tree and suspended froma limb or a rafter - anything that would hold his weight, and hid middle cut open. His insides were allowed to drop into a tub and water was poured thru him to wash him out. Mother took the tub of intestines and cut all the fat off for lard. The hog was taken down and laid on a table to be cut up. Hams, shoulders, middlings. jowls and maybe a few other parts were then carried to the smoke house and covered with sugar - cure or plain salt until it was cured. This took several cold days and nights. It was then washed and hung with grass ropes by the piece and smoked with fire from hickory wood. Ribs, backbone and liver were divded with neighbors and eaten fresh. Sausage meat and fat meat was cut in small pieces. Fat meat was cooked in the wash pot for lard. Cracklings were used for crackling bread or sometimes mother made lye soap with them for washing clothes. Sausage meat was ground in the sausage mill, seasoned and stuffed. Mother sewed white strips of cloth into narrow sacks, stuffing the sausage in and pressin them flat. They were then hung in the pantry to dry out. The hogs head was used for sauce or mincemeat. The

feet were pickled but not at our house. We turned up our noses at suck!

Then it was always a lot of dirty clean up work. The greasy tubs and pots had to be cleaned before wash day. The yard swept and the hair burned around the wash pot and the most disagreeable part of hog - killing was that the bad weather had to be cold - cold - to cure the meat. But we did enjoy eating the meat!

In the fall when grass was fresh dried was time for making new mattresses to be used next to the springs with cotton mattresses on top. I don't remember that we ever made hay mattresses but others did.

After school jobs, besides milking and feeding, was getting the wood in the house for the fireplace and cook stove. We had to have enough stove wood to keep the kitchen warm after supper long enough for us to get our lessons. Big black sticks were put in the fireplace so there would be coals in the morning to get a quick fire going. Splinters cut from rich pine made a fast hot fire to make other wood burn. Pine knots were also added. Some of the fireplace wood was brought into the house and other was stacked on the end of the porch. "Sto - wood" was stacked in the corner of the kitchen behind the stove.

Lamp chimneys were cleaned free from smoke and sut with newspaper. Wicks were trimmed and lamps weree filled with kerosene often. We sat on benches on either side of the oil cloth covered eating table to study, so the light had to be as bright as a kerosene light could be, for all of us to see.

When weather was too cold the girls would heat a smoothing iron, wrap it in an old sweater and put it at the foot of the bed under the cover to keep our feet warm.

After i finished school Mother and I pieced and quilted quilts in the winter time. Mother carded the batts for the quilts from home - grown cotton. That is one thing I have found that I never learned to do. I could card batts but could never get them off the cards without tearingt them up.

Mother taught me to sew while I was still a teenager. I started designing and cutting patterns for all my clothes from pictures. One time I made a black organdy blouse for myself. There was nothing disgraceful about it but because you could see thru the material +peaches' said, "Hmm - Sissie, I be ±shamed to wear that."

Mother taught me to embroidery and smock. Aunt Julia Merle Heaton Blake taught me to crochet. Aunt Omie Heaton Graves taught me to make tatting. Later in life, durin World War II, I learned to knit, when we knitted sweaters for soilders.

Thanksgiving and Christmas always meant a fresh boiled ham, chicken dressing, candied sweet potatoes, apple salad, stacked chocolate cake with home - grown pecans on it and a stacked fresh coconut cake, pies, along with home - made light bread, home churned butter and whipped cream. Mother was a good cook! Christmas she always made chocolate fudge and divinity candy.

Christmas with all the good food Mother cooked and the apples, oranges, candies, english walnuts, nigger - toes, clusters of raisins, fire crackers and sparklers, even tho we seldom had toys, made a Merry Christmas at our house!

And another good year comes to an end!

And then I fell in love --- And that's another long story!

"THE GIRL I USED TO BE"

How I should like to meet that girl
the one I used to be!
But could I meet her clear young eyes,
would she approve of me?
She had so many hopes and plans - - -
I've failed her dreadfully!
But I should love to see again
That girl I used to be!

From fettering bonds of doubt and fear

she stood divinely free
Upon the summit of the world - - -
that girl I used to be,
Life was one grand adventure then - - -
how I should like, Ah, me,
To be again that joyous thing,
the girl I used to be!

When did I lose the elf in spite - - -
when did she silent flee
The outward semblance long was gone - - -
but I was surely she!
And Oh! the grayness of the day
that I awoke to see
No ling' ring trace, no single grace
Of her I used to be.

by Estelle Webb Thomas

Margie Neal

Margie Neal was one of Panola County's most distinguished native citizens. Her story has been reviewed before in a prior issue of Loblolly. Then in 1987 a campaign was started to honor Margie Neal with a Texas Historical Marker in Carthage, recognition to her unique contributions to Texas. Under the guidance of her teacher, Ann Morris, Jennifer McNatt of Carthage High School created the research paper needed for marker approval. These efforts bore fruit in 1988 with the unveiling of the marker on the Carthage Square. Jennifer's paper is now shared with our readers.

Margie Elizabeth Neal's accomplishments were vital and many. Her contributions to the history of Panola County and to the Texas Education System were immeasurable.

Margie Elizabeth Neal was born in a small log house on a farm near Clayton, Texas, on

April 20, 1875. Margie was the daughter of William Lafayette Neal, a native Georgian, and Martha Anne Gholston Neal, also of Georgian birth.

Margie's formal education began at a very early age at Bethlehem School. The school was roughly three miles from the Neal home, and the children always walked.

Obviously, the education opportunities of the rural community were limited. The Bethlehem School session lasted only four months each year, and Mr. Neal, realizing clearly the necessity for a good education, moved his family to Carthage, eight miles away.

Margie began her studies under the distinguished, strict disciplinarian, Professor Carswell. Her father sold much of his interest in the farm and was considering opening a business in Carthage. He needed a bookkeeper, and the promising young Margie seemed to be just the answer. After two years of studying bookkeeping under Professor Carswell, Margie had learned everything Carswell was qualified to teach. She would have to go away to school.

In 1890 Margie moved to Dallas with Reverend John Holland, a Dallas minister. She enrolled in Hill's Business College as a student in the Department of Bookkeeping. She finished the course by early summer and returned to Carthage prepared to assist her father. But, while she was away, he decided not to immediately enter the business venture, and Margie had no desire to work for anyone else.

In the fall of 1891, she entered the newly established Panola County Male and Female College, which was the first high school established in Panola County. In June 1892, Margie was awarded a scholarship to Sam Houston Normal Institute at Huntsville. Margie's year was successful in every respect. In the spring of 1893, she received a first grade teaching certificate, which entitled her to teach throughout Texas for three years.

These certificates were granted to the persons who had satisfactorily completed the second year's work and who gave evidence of decided ability for governing and teaching.

After returning to Carthage, Margie opened her own private school for grades one through five. It was a small school, and a short-lived one, but it marked the entry of Margie E. Neal to active public life.

In January, 1895, she enrolled again in Sam Houston Normal Institute, where she further pursued her studies. From the fall of 1895 to December, 1904, Margie was principally occupied with her work as a teacher. In the decade following 1893, she worked in at least seven separate schools, and in only one of these did she remain more than one year. To a casual observer, these frequent changes might suggest instability or inefficiency, but the record, scanty as it is, does not bear out such an assumption. Indeed, every new position which she accepted was a substantial promotion.

In 1896 Margie attended a summer normal institute in Henderson in order to renew her certificate. The following is a quote from H. H. Ransom concerning Miss Mollie, as she was affectionately referred to:

"It gives me pleasure to recommend to any school or city Miss Mollie Neal of Carthage, Texas, as especially qualified to teach English. During this summer I had the honor to serve on the State Board of Education at the State capital, and among the number of over two thousand applicants who stood examinations for state certificates, Miss Neal's papers in English were the nearest to perfect, she having recieved the highest grade given.

In addition to knowledge of English she enjoys the happy faculty of imparting knowledge, and possesses the spirit and vim of the true teacher, in addition to being tireless in her energy. I do not hesitate to give her my unreserved endorsement."

Because of severe sinus condition, Margie was advised to spend some time in Florida. After writing letters to school officials throughout Florida, Margie accepted a job in Jacksonville for the 1896-1897 session. She secured lodging with a wealthy widow and was very pleased with her job, but her sinus condition in no way improved. Therefore, at the insistence of her father, who was unhappy about his daughter's being so far from home, Margie returned to Carthage.

In the 1900, Margie attended a summer normal in Fort Worth, at which time she met several Fort Worth educators. She was impressed with the city and decided to seek a job in the schools there. After living there two weeks Miss Neal was assigned as a teacher to the fifth grade of the Belcamp Street School. As the mid-point of the school year 1903-1904 approached, however, her teaching career was drawing to a close. Her father came to Fort Worth and revealed to Margie that her mother, who had been semi-invalid most of her life, was steadily growing worse. In spite of the difficulty of the decision, the answer came --- Mother means more to me than my job.

Colonel Tom M. Bowers, owner of the Texas Mule, a weekly newspaper published in Carthage, was a bed-ridden man who wanted to sell his paper. Mr. Neal, sensing the grand opportunity, attempted to make the most of it. Margie had no experience in newspaper work, but she lost no time in taking control. She renamed the paper The East Texas Register, and this first issue came out on January 5, 1904. Margie Neal continued publishing the East Texas Register until 1911, when she sold it. Margie was a member of the Texas Editorial Association, the Texas Press Association, and other fraternal groups.

Her first public service in the state included appointment as first woman member, and vice-chairman of the State Normal School

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Board of Regents, (1921-1927). She was the district chairman in fight for women's suffrage, which was won in January, 1920.

Neal was the first woman member of the State Democratic Executive Committee, and she was a delegate to the National Democratic Convention in San Francisco in 1920. She was appointed one of two representatives from Texas to attend notification ceremonies for President and Vice-President nominees. Margie, a life long Democrat, supported the Eisenhower-Nixon Republican ticket. She spoke on nationwide television showing this support. Margie also had the honor of introducing Richard Nixon at his Longview, Texas rally during that campaign in 1952.

Stephen F. Austin, now Stephen F. Austin State University, opened in September, 1923, with Margie Neal chairman of the building committee. Miss Neal worked most consistently during the years from 1921 to 1927 at her duty as a regent for the State Teacher College.

The first problem confronting Miss Neal was where to build the next college. Provisions had been made for colleges in both Nacogdoches and Kingsville. In May, 1921, the regents met in Nacogdoches to view at first hand the case for the early establishment of a school there.

After leaving Nacogdoches, the Board proceeded to Kingsville. On May 12, the regents met in Austin to decide between the two locations; Nacogdoches was selected overwhelmingly. Stephen F. Austin State Normal College officially opened in Nacogdoches in September, 1923. Two years later, in the summer of 1925, the South Texas Normal College in Kingsville was opened.

Because of Miss Neal's love for education, she decided to run for the Texas Senate from the second senatorial district. In March, 1926, after consulting her father and many of her trusted friends, Margie E. Neal announced her candidacy.

On Saturday, June 12, she formally opened her campaign with a rally in the county court room in Carthage. There, she espoused her four major goals. First, there was a need for better schools, especially rural schools. This was to be met through an increased per capital apportionment for scholastics. Secondly, there was a pressing demand for an improved system of highways. This would be met by a proposed gas tax. Her third goal was never precisely explained, but it dealt with the aid and encouragement of farmers, labor, and capital in Texas. Finally, there was a demand for fewer and better laws and for improved law enforcement.

Margie E. Neal swept through the second district winning every county except the home of her opponent, Gary B. Sanford. In the end, she defeated Sanford 2382 to 1224. Thus, becoming "the first woman to invade the masculine sanctity of the Texas senate. In her Senatorial address, she stressed the division of politics and education. Political situations can take care of themselves, but the school boys and girls are looking to you and me to take care of their interests. Miss Neal ended her address thanking the voters who had supported her. "My pride in my own efforts will make me want to make for Texas the best Senator the district ever had. My pride in the high-hearted men of Texas, who have honored me with their confidence and friendship for years, and now with their support, will make me want to make for them the best Senator the district ever had... for my great victory, I give God, and people of the district, praise and thanks."

Miss Neal's first bill as a Senator was directed toward the repeal of the Fairchild Law. The bill was reported favorably from the Committee of Educational Affairs, and by early February it was before the Senate for consideration. On the second reading Senator Thomas B. Love, of Dallas, offered and secured an amendment designed to entitle any

individual to a teacher's certificate provided he taught six or more successive years immediately preceeding the issurance thereof. After being subjected to the Love Amendment quoted thereof, it was virtually no different from the Fairchild Law it was designed to repeal. "The lady Senator was extremely disturbed, and because of her displeasure she voted against her bill on its final passage. The teacher certification bill was lost, but complete victory could have hardly been more glorious for the sponser.

Miss Neal had personal goals for public schools, and she accomplished much with the Legislature. "Her legislative contributions to the field of education fell largely into these categories: matters relating to efficient educational administration, matters relating to educational standards, and matters relating to curriculum content." Miss Neal also championed the bill providing physical education in Texas' public schools. She was credited with introducing and pushing the bill creating the State Board of Education. She actively supported the bill requiring the study of state and national constitutions, and finally, she introduced and guided the measure accepting benefits of a federal law for vocational rehabilitation for the crippled.

In February, 1930, Miss Neal was re-elected to the Senate unopposed. But, after serving four consecutive terms in office, Miss Neal refused re-election. After eight years in the Senate, the Texas woman Senator went to Washington where she was with the National Recovery Administration, later the Federal Security Administration, and the War Manpower Commision. She resigned from the latter and returned to Carthage in January, 1945. There, she became a charter member of the Carthage Book Club, was interested in the Altrussa Club, and was a member of the Delta Kappa Gamma. In a 1935-1936 edition of the Carthage Book Club's

History of Panola County, it discussed Margie E. Neal's successes. "Our one-time local teacher, newspaper owner, and editor of the Register, Miss Margie E. Neal, was the first woman Senator of Texas and is now doing efficient work in the Federal Education Department. The State Senate conferred many honors on her out of appreciation of her efficiency and sterling worth and faithful service rendered during her terms of senatorship. Now she is in direct line of a high promotion in her present field of activity. Time marches on.

In June, 1952, Panola County paid Miss Margie E. Neal a long overdue respect. The Appreciation Day ceremony was held at Martin Stadium, where over 1000 people attended, many of whom were national and state businessmen, religious, journalistic, and poltical leaders. Governor Allan Shivers, the first state chief executive in twenty-five years to set foot on Panola County soil, was just one of the people present. Miss Neal is a symbol of those things that are noble and inspiring. She is tender, warm-hearted, and gracious, yet she is possessed of a toughness of fibre and a clarity of mind that enables her to see new horizons, to set her foot on new paths, and to follow them through without faultering to the goal. . . Her sympathies are always with the underprivileaged and the handicapped. Senator Lyndon B. Johnson was another prominent figure at the gathering. He stressed Miss Neal's intergrity, courage, and ability. These are the qualities which unify in Miss Margie Neal to produce the finest type of Texan, the finest type of American. These are the qualities which she has brought to a lifetime of selfless devotion to public duty. The Marshall News Messenger described Miss Neal as the First Lady of Carthage and Panola County. Lynn Landrume, in the most widely read column in the south, in the Dallas News said, "She is tops. Carthage, you know, is

as American as Bunker Hill-and as south as a Rebel yell. And so is Margie Neal, bless her heart." Upon accepting a plaque Margie Neal said that these honors brought her the greatest humility and keenest sense of appreciation. "It touches me deeply. You have my profound thanks... For all this loyalty and love, the wells of my emotions are drained dry when I try even faintly to express my gratitude. Mrs. John C. Brown concluded the afternoon with a summary of Miss Neal's life in verse:

Yes, she had a good opponent,
But you know it was mere folly,
When the politicians thought
a mere man
could beat our Mollie.

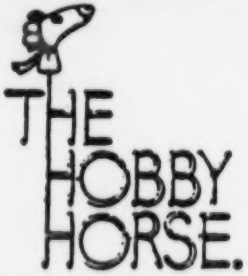
When Margie E. Neal returned to Carthage in January, 1945, she apparently believed that she was entering a life of relative quiescence. She planned to manage her property interest, to devote herself to domestic duties, and to accept her responsibilities as a citizen of Carthage and Panola County. The mere act of retiring, however, implied no desire to sink into obscurity. Retirement did not change her zest for living, nor did it alter her mindfulness of civic progress. As a result, she accepted many duties in community life and began to set a pace which amazed many of her fellow townspeople. There was work to be done, and Margie E. Neal was not one to reject the challenge.

Margie Elizabeth Neal refused to live in the past. The key to her vigor lay in her realization that there is all of the present to live in, and all of the future to believe in, and all of the neighbors to work for and to love. Margie Neal died at the age of ninety-six on December 19, 1971, in Carthage, Texas.

Margie Elizabeth Neal was a leader. Her accomplishments were many and vital, and her

place in her state's history an inevitable one. The measure of success was not luck, or even a special gift. Margie Neal worked hard to do her part. Margie E. Neal, public servant and prominent citizen, was more than just the first woman Senator. She was a teacher, a leader, a politician, and a lady whose contributions to today's society are immeasurable.

Panola County Historical Commission and Panola County citzens desire to secure a State Historical Marker to honor her memory.



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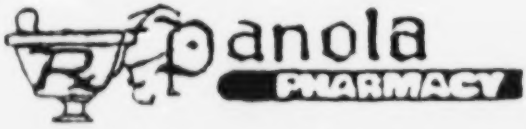

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